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DANDELION CLOCKS

AND

OTHER TALES



"Good-bye, good Sister."—PAGE 15.

Frontispiece.

Dandelion Clocks

AND

Other Tales

BY

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AUTHOR OF "JACKANAPES," ETC., ETC., ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY GORDON BROWNE & OTHER ARTISTS

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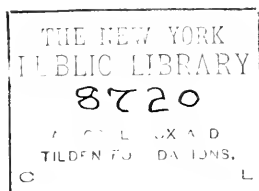
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* "Ladders to Heaven" was an old name for Lilies of the Valley.



All the stories in this book were originally published in Aunt Judy's Magazine, except "The Trinity Flower," and this appeared in The Monthly Packet (May, 1866), under the title of "The Blind Hermit and the Trinity Flower."

Most of the illustrations are drawn by Mr. Gordon Browne, but four German woodcuts have been reproduced on pages 9, 17, 26 and 50, as Mrs. Ewing wrote the tales of "Dandelion Clocks," "The Blind Man and the Talking Dog," "So-So," and "Ladders to Heaven," to fit these pictures, and it is interesting to see how carefully she made use of every detail in the designs.

H. K. F. G.

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DANDELION CLOCKS.



VERY child knows how to tell the time by a dandelion clock. You blow till the seed is all blown away, and you count each of the puffs—an hour to a puff. Every child knows this, and very

few children want to know any more on the subject. It was Peter Paul's peculiarity that he always did want to know more about everything; a habit whose first and foremost inconvenience is that one can so seldom get people to answer one's questions.

Peter Paul and his two sisters were playing in the pastures. Rich, green, Dutch pastures, unbroken by hedge or wall, which stretched—like an emerald ocean—to the horizon and met the sky. The cows stood ankle-deep in it and chewed the cud, the clouds sailed slowly over it to

the sea, and on a dry hillock sat Mother, in her broad sun-hat, with one eye to the cows and one to the linen she was bleaching, thinking of her farm.

Peter Paul and his sisters had found another little hillock where, among some tufts of meadow-flowers which the cows had not yet eaten, were dandelion clocks. They divided them quite fairly, and began to tell each other the time of day.

Little Anna blew very hard for her size, and as the wind blew too, her clock was finished in a couple of puffs. "One, two. It's only two o'clock," she said, with a sigh.

Her elder sister was more careful, but still the wind was against them. "One, two, three. It's three o'clock by me," she said.

Peter Paul turned his back to the wind, and held his clock low. "One, two, three, four, five. It's five o'clock by my dandelion—I wonder why the fairy clocks all go differently."

"We blow differently," said his sister.

"Then they don't really tell the time," said Peter Paul.

"Oh yes, they do—the fairy time." And the little girls got more clocks, and turned their backs to the wind in imitation of Peter Paul, and went on blowing. But the boy went up to his mother.

"Mother, why do dandelion clocks keep different time? It was only two o'clock by Anna's, and three o'clock by Leena's, and five by mine. It can't really be evening with me and only afternoon with Anna. The days don't go quicker with one person than another, do they?"

"Drive Daisy and Buttermilk nearer this way," said his mother; "and if you must ask questions, ask your Uncle Jacob."

There was a reason for sending the boy to Uncle Jacob with his difficulties. He had been born after his father's death, and Uncle Jacob had taken up the paternal duties.

It was he who had chosen the child's name. He had called him Peter Paul after Peter Paul Rubens, not that he hoped the boy would become a painter, but he wished him to be called after some great man, and—having just returned from Antwerp—the only great man he could think of was Peter Paul."



"Give a boy a great name," said Uncle Jacob, "and if there's any stuff in him, there's a chance he'll live up to it."

This was a kindly way of putting the proverb about giving a dog a bad name, and Uncle Jacob's strongest quality was kindness—kindness and the cultivation of tulips.

He was sitting in the summer-house smoking, and reading over a bulb-list when Peter Paul found him.

"Uncle Jacob, why do dandelion clocks tell different time to different people? Sixty seconds make a minute, sixty minutes make an hour, twenty-four hours make a day, three hundred and sixty-five days make a year. That's right, isn't it? Hours are the same length for everybody, aren't they? But if I got to tea-time when it was only two o'clock with Anna, and went on like that, first the days and then the years would go much quicker with me, and I don't know if I should die sooner,—but it couldn't be, could it?"

"Certainly not," said Uncle Jacob; and he went on with his list. "Yellow Pottebakker, Yellow Tournesol and Yellow Rose."

"Then the fairy clocks tell lies?" said Peter Paul.

"That you must ask Godfather Time," replied Uncle Jacob, jocosely. "He is responsible for the clocks and the hour-glasses."

"Where does he live?" asked the boy.

But Uncle Jacob had spread the list on the summer-house table; he was fairly immersed in it and in a cloud of tobacco smoke, and Peter Paul did not like to disturb him.

"Twenty-five Byblœmens, twenty-five Bizards, twenty-five Roses, and a seedling-bed for first bloom this year."

Some of Uncle Jacob's seedling tulips were still "breeders," whose future was yet unmarked* (he did not name them in hope, as he had christened his nephew!) when Peter Paul went to sea.

He was quite unfitted for a farmer. He was always

* The first bloom of seedling tulips is usually without stripes or markings, and it is often years before they break into stripes; till then they are called breeders, and are not named.

looking forward to what he should do hereafter, or backward to the time when he believed in fairy clocks. Now a farmer should live in the present, and time himself by a steady-going watch with an enamelled face. Then little things get done at the right time, which is everything in farming.

"Peter Paul puzzles too much," said his mother, "and that is your fault, Jacob, for giving him a great name. But while he's thinking, Daisy misses her mash and the hens lay away. He'll never make a farmer. Indeed, for that matter, men never farm like women, and Leena will take to it after me. She knows all my ways"

They were a kindly family, with no minds to make this short life bitter for each other by thwarting, as so many well-meaning relatives do; so the boy chose his own trade and went to sea.

He saw many places and many people; he saw a great deal of life, and came face to face with death more than once, and under strange shapes. He found answers to a lot of the old questions, and then new ones came in their stead. Each year seemed to hold more than a life-time at home would have held, and yet how quickly the years went by!

A great many had gone by when Peter Paul set foot once more upon Dutch soil.

"And it only seems like yesterday that I went away!" said he.

Mother was dead. That was the one great change. Peter Paul's sisters had inherited the farm. They managed it together, and they had divided their mother's clothes, and also her rings and earrings, her gold skull-cap and head-band and pins,—the heirlooms of a Dutch farmeress.

"It matters very little how we divide them, dear," Anna had said, "for I shall never marry, and they will all go to your girl."

The elder sister was married and had two children. She had grown up very pretty—a fair woman, with liquid misleading eyes. They looked as if they were gazing into the far future, but they did not see an inch beyond the farm. Anna was a very plain copy of her in body, in mind she was the elder sister's echo. They were very fond of each other, and the prettiest thing about them was their faithful love for their mother, whose memory was kept as green as pastures after rain.

On Sunday Peter Paul went with them to her grave, and then to service. The ugly little church, the same old clerk, even the look of that part of the seat where Peter Paul had kicked the paint off during sermons—strengthened the feeling that it could only have been a few days since he was there before.

As they walked home he told his sisters about the various religious services he had seen abroad. They were curious to hear about them, under a sort of protest, for they disapproved of every form of worship but their own.

"The music in some of the cathedrals is very beautiful," said Peter Paul. "And the choristers in their gowns, singing as they come, always affect me. No doubt only some are devout at heart, and others careless—which is also the case with the congregation—but outward reverence is, at the lowest, an acknowledgment of what we owe, and for my own part it helps me. Those white figures are not angels I know; but they make one think of them, and I try to be worthier of singing GOD'S praises with them."

There was a little pause, and Leena's beautiful eyes were full of reflections.

Presently she said, "Who washes all the white gowns?"

"I really don't know," said Peter Paul.

"I fancy they don't bleach anywhere as they do in Holland," she continued. "Indeed, Brother, I doubt if

Dutchwomen are what they were. No one bleaches as Mother did. Mother bleached beautifully."

"Yes, she bleached beautifully," said Anna.

Peter Paul was only to be three weeks at home before he sailed again; but when ten days were over, he began to think the rest of the time would never come to an end. And this was from no want of love for his sisters, or of respect for their friends. One cannot help having an irritable brain, which rides an idea to the moon and home again, without stirrups, whilst some folks are getting the harness of words on to its back. There had been hours in his youth when all the unsolved riddles, the untasted joys, the great possibilities of even a common existence like his, so pressed upon him, that the shortness of the longest life of man seemed the most pitiable thing about it. But when he took tea with Vrow Schmidt and her daughters, and supper-time would not come, Peter Paul thought of the penance of the Wandering Jew, and felt very sorry for him.

The sisters would have been glad if Peter Paul would have given up the sea and settled down with them. Leena had a plan of her own for it. She wanted him to marry Vrow Schmidt's niece, who had a farm.

"But I am afraid you do not care for young ladies?" said she.

Peter Paul got red.

"Vrow Schmidt's niece is a very nice young lady," said he.

He was not thinking of Vrow Schmidt's niece, he was thinking of something else—something for which he would have liked a little sympathy; but he doubted whether Leena could give it to him. Indeed, to cure heartache is Godfather Time's business, and even he is not invariably successful. It was probably a sharp twinge that made Peter Paul say, "Have you never wondered that when

one's life is so very short, one can manage to get so much pain into it?"

Leena dropped her work and looked up. "You don't say so?" said she. "Dear Brother, is it rheumatism? I'm sure it must be a dreadful risk being out on the masts in the night air, without a roof over your head. But do you wear flannel, Peter Paul? Mother was very much troubled with rheumatism latterly. She thought it was the dews at milking time, and she always wore flannel."

"Yes, dear, Mother always wore flannel," said Anna.

Peter Paul satisfied them on this head. He wore flannel, red flannel too, which has virtues of its own.

Leena was more anxious than ever that he should marry Vrow Schmidt's niece, and be taken good care of.

But it was not to be: Peter Paul went back to his ship and into the wide world again.

Uncle Jacob would have given him an off-set of his new tulip—a real novelty, and named—if he had had any place to plant it in.

"I've a bed of breeders that will be worth looking at next time you come home," said he.

Leena walked far over the pastures with Peter Paul. She was very fond of him, and she had a woman's perception that they would miss him more than he could miss them.

"I am very sorry you could not settle down with us," she said, and her eyes brimmed over.

Peter Paul kissed the tears tenderly from her cheeks.

"Perhaps I shall when I am older, and have shaken off a few more of my whims into the sea. I'll come back yet, Leena, and live very near to you and grow tulips, and be as good an old bachelor-uncle to your boy as Uncle Jacob was to me."

"And if a foreign wife would suit you better than one of the Schmidts," said Leena, re-arranging his bundle for

him, "don't think we sha'n't like her. Any one you love will be welcome to us, Peter Paul—as welcome as you have been."

When they got to the hillock where Mother used to sit, Peter Paul took her once more into his arms.

"Good-bye, good Sister," he said. "I have been back in my childhood again, and GOD knows that is both pleasant and good for one."

"And it is funny that you should say so," said Leena, smiling through her tears; "for when we were children you were never happy except in thinking of when you should be a man."

"And there sit your children, just where we used to play," said Peter Paul.

"They are blowing dandelion clocks," said Leena, and she called them,

"Come and bid Uncle Peter good-bye."

He kissed them both.

"Well, what o'clock is it?" said he. The boy gave one mighty puff and dispersed his fairy clock at a breath.

"One o'clock," he cried stoutly.

"One, two, three, four o'clock," said the girl. And they went back to their play.

And Leena stood by them, with Mother's old sun-hat on her young head, and watched Peter Paul's figure over the flat pastures till it was an indistinguishable speck.

He turned back a dozen times to wave his hands to her, and to the children telling the fairy time.

But he did not ask now why dandelion clocks go differently with different people. Godfather Time had told him. He teaches us many things.

THE BLIND MAN AND THE TALKING DOG.

THERE was once an old man whom Fortune (whose own eyes are bandaged) had deprived of his sight. She had taken his hearing also, so that he was deaf. Poor he had always been, and as Time had stolen his youth and strength from him, they had only left a light burden for Death to carry when he should come the old man's way.

But Love (who is blind also) had given the Blind Man a Dog, who led him out in the morning to a seat in the sun under the crab-tree, and held his hat for wayside alms, and brought him safely home at sunset.

The Dog was wise and faithful—as dogs often are—but the wonder of him was that he could talk. In which will be seen the difference between dogs and men, most of whom can talk; whilst it is a matter for admiration if they are wise and faithful.

One day the Mayor's little son came down the road, and by the hand he held his playmate Aldegunda.

"Give the poor blind man a penny," said she.

"You are always wanting me to give away my money," replied the boy peevishly. "It is well that my father is the richest man in the town, and that I have a whole silver crown yet in my pocket."

But he put the penny into the hat which the Dog held out, and the Dog gave it to his master.

"Heaven bless you," said the Blind Man

"Amen," said the Dog.

"Aldegunda! Aldegunda!" cried the boy, dancing with delight. "Here is a dog who can talk. I would give my silver crown for him. Old man, I say, old man! Will you sell me your dog for a silver crown?"

"My master is deaf as well as blind," said the Dog.



"What a miserable old creature he must be," said the boy compassionately.

"Men do not smile when they are miserable, do they?" said the Dog; "and my master smiles sometimes—when

the sun warms right through our coats to our bones ; when he feels the hat shake against his knee as the pennies drop in ; and when I lick his hand."

"But for all that, he is a poor wretched old beggar, in want of everything," persisted the boy. "Now I am the Mayor's only son, and he is the richest man in the town. Come and live with me, and I will give the Blind Man my silver crown. I should be perfectly happy if I had a talking dog of my own."

"It is worth thinking of," said the Dog. "I should certainly like a master who was perfectly happy. You are sure that there is nothing else that you wish for?"

"I wish I were a man," replied the boy. "To do exactly as I chose, and have plenty of money to spend, and holidays all the year round."

"That sounds well," said the Dog. "Perhaps I had better wait till you grow up. There is nothing else that you want, I suppose?"

"I want a horse," said the boy, "a real black charger. My father ought to know that I am too old for a hobby-horse. It vexes me to look at it."

"I must wait for the charger, I see," said the Dog. "Nothing vexes you but the hobby-horse, I hope?"

"Aldegunda vexes me more than anything," answered the boy, with an aggrieved air ; "and it's very hard when I am so fond of her. She always tumbles down when we run races, her legs are so short. It's her birthday to-day, but she toddles as badly as she did yesterday, though she's a year older."

"She will have learned to run by the time that you are a man," said the Dog. "So nice a little lady can give you no other cause of annoyance, I am sure?"

The boy frowned.

"She is always wanting something. She wants something now, I see. What do you want, Aldegunda?"

"I wish—" said Aldegunda, timidly, "I should like—the blind man to have the silver crown, and for us to keep the penny, if you can get it back out of the hat."

"That's just the way you go on," said the boy angrily. "You always think differently from me. Now remember, Aldegunda, I won't marry you when you grow big, unless you agree with what I do, like the wife in the story of 'What the Goodman does is sure to be right.'"

On hearing this, Aldegunda sobbed till she burst the strings of her hat, and the boy had to tie them afresh.

"I won't marry you at all if you cry," said he.

But at that she only cried the more, and they went away bickering into the green lanes.

As to the old man, he had heard nothing; and when the dog licked his withered hand, he smiled.

Many a time did the boy return with his playmate to try and get the Talking Dog. But the Dog always asked if he had yet got all that he wanted, and, being an honourable child, the boy was too truthful to say that he was content when he was not.

"The day that you want nothing more but me I will be your dog," it said. "Unless, indeed, my present master should have attained perfect happiness before you."

"I am not afraid of that," said the boy.

In time the Mayor died, and his widow moved to her native town and took her son with her.

Years passed, and the Blind Man lived on; for when one gets very old and keeps very quiet in his little corner of the world, Death seems sometimes to forget to remove him.

Years passed, and the Mayor's son became a man, and was strong and rich, and had a fine black charger. Aldegunda grew up also. She was very beautiful, wonderfully beautiful, and Love (who is blind) gave her to her old playmate.



The wedding was a fine one, and when it was over the bridegroom mounted his black charger and took his bride behind him, and rode away into the green lanes.

"Ah, what delight!" he said. "Now we will ride through the town where we lived when we were children; and if the Blind Man is still alive, you shall give him a silver crown; and if the Talking Dog is alive, I shall claim him, for to-day I am perfectly happy and want nothing."

Aldegundaa thought to herself—"We are so happy, and have so much, that I do not like to take the Blind Man's dog from him;" but she did not dare to say so. One—if not two—must bear and forbear to be happy even on one's wedding day.

By-and-bye they rode under the crab-tree, but the seat was empty. "What has become of the Blind Man?" the Mayor's son asked of a peasant who was near.

"He died two days ago," said the peasant. "He is buried to-day, and the priest and chanters are now returning from the grave."

"And the Talking Dog?" asked the young man.

"He is at the grave now," said the peasant; "but he has neither spoken nor eaten since his master died."

"We have come in the nick of time," said the young man triumphantly, and he rode to the churchyard.

By the grave was the dog, as the man had said, and up the winding path came the priest and his young chanters, who sang with shrill, clear voices—"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

"Come and live with me, now your old master is gone," said the young man, stooping over the dog. But he made no reply.

"I think he is dead, sir," said the grave-digger.

"I don't believe it," said the young man fretfully. "He was an Enchanted Dog, and he promised I should have

him when I could say what I am ready to say now. He should have kept his promise."

But Aldegunda had taken the dog's cold head into her arms, and her tears fell fast over it.

"You forget," she said; "he only promised to come to you when you were happy, if his old master were not happier first; and, perhaps,——"

"I remember that you always disagree with me," said the young man, impatiently. "You always did do so. Tears on our wedding-day, too! I suppose the truth is that no one is happy."

Aldegunda made no answer, for it is not from those one loves that he will willingly learn that with a selfish and imperious temper happiness never dwells.

And as they rode away again into the green lanes, the shrill voices of the chanters followed them—"Blessed are the dead. Blessed are the dead."

“SO - SO.”



“Be sure, my child,” said the widow to her little daughter, “that you always do just as you are told.”

“Very well, Mother.”

“Or at any rate do what will do just as well,” said the small house-dog, as he lay blinking at the fire.

“You darling!” cried little Joan, and she sat down

on the hearth and hugged him. But he got up and shook himself, and moved three turns nearer the oven, to be out of the way; for though her arms were soft she had kept her doll in the nest, and that was made of wood, which hurts.

“What a dear, kind house-dog you are!” said little Joan, and she meant what she said, for it does feel nice to have the sharp edges of one’s duty a little softened off for one.

He was no particular kind of dog, but he was very smooth to stroke, and had a nice way of blinking with his eyes, which it was soothing to see. There had been a difficulty about his name. The name of the house-dog before him was Faithful, and well it became him, as his tombstone testified. The one before that was called Wolf. He was very wild, and ended his days on the gallows, for worrying sheep. The little house-dog never chased anything, to the widow's knowledge. There was no reason whatever for giving him a bad name, and she thought of several good ones, such as Faithful, and Trusty, and Keeper, which are fine old-fashioned titles, but none of these seemed quite perfectly to suit him. So he was called So-so; and a very nice soft name it is.

The widow was only a poor woman, though she contrived by her industry to keep a decent home together, and to get now one and now another little comfort for herself and her child.

One day she was going out on business, and she called her little daughter and said to her, "I am going out for two hours. You are too young to protect yourself and the house, and So-so is not as strong as Faithful was. But when I go, shut the house-door and bolt the big wooden bar, and be sure that you do not open it for any reason whatever till I return. If strangers come, So-so may bark, which he can do as well as a bigger dog. Then they will go away. With this summer's savings I have bought a quilted petticoat for you and a duffle cloak for myself against the winter, and if I get the work I am going after to-day, I shall buy enough wool to knit warm stockings for us both. So be patient till I return, and then we will have the plum-cake that is in the cupboard for tea."

"Thank you, Mother."

"Good-bye, my child. Be sure you do just as I have told you," said the widow.

"Very well, Mother."

Little Joan laid down her doll, and shut the house-door, and fastened the big bolt. It was very heavy, and the kitchen looked gloomy when she had done it.

"I wish Mother had taken us all three with her, and had locked the house and put the key in her big pocket, as she has done before," said little Joan, as she got into the rocking-chair, to put her doll to sleep.

"Yes, it would have done just as well," So-so replied as he stretched himself on the hearth.

By-and-bye Joan grew tired of hushabying the doll, who looked none the sleepier for it, and she took the three-legged stool and sat down in front of the clock to watch the hands. After awhile she drew a deep sigh.

"There are sixty seconds in every single minute, So-so," said she.

"So I have heard," said So-so. He was snuffing in the back place, which was not usually allowed.

"And sixty whole minutes in every hour, So-so."

"You don't say so!" growled So-so. He had not found a bit, and the cake was on the top shelf. There was not so much as a spilt crumb, though he snuffed in every corner of the kitchen, till he stood snuffing under the house-door.

"The air smells fresh," he said.

"It's a beautiful day, I know," said little Joan. "I wish Mother had allowed us to sit on the doorstep. We could have taken care of the house——"

"Just as well," said So-so.

Little Joan came to smell the air at the keyhole, and, as So-so had said, it smelt very fresh. Besides, one could see from the window how fine the evening was.

"It's not exactly what Mother told us to do," said Joan, "but I do believe——"

"It would do just as well," said So-so.

By-and-bye little Joan unfastened the bar, and opened the door, and she and the doll and So-so went out and sat on the doorstep.

Not a stranger was to be seen. The sun shone delightfully. An evening sun, and not too hot. All day it had been ripening the corn in the field close by, and this glowed and waved in the breeze.



"It does just as well, and better," said little Joan, "for if anyone comes we can see him coming up the field-path."

"Just so," said So-so, blinking in the sunshine. Suddenly Joan jumped up.

"Oh!" cried she, "there's a bird, a big bird. Dear So-so, can you see him? I can't, because of the sun. What a queer noise he makes. Crake! crake! Oh, I can see him now! He is not flying, he is running, and he has gone into the corn. I do wish I were in the corn, I would catch him, and put him in a cage."

"I'll catch him," said So-so, and he put up his tail, and started off.

"No, no!" cried Joan. "You are not to go. You must stay and take care of the house, and bark if anyone comes."

"You could scream, and that would do just as well," replied So-so, with his tail still up.

"No, it wouldn't," cried little Joan.

"Yes, it would," reiterated So-so.

Whilst they were bickering, an old woman came up to the door; she had a brown face, and black hair, and a very old red cloak.

"Good evening, my little dear," said she. "Are you all at home this fine evening?"

"Only three of us," said Joan; "I, and my doll, and So-so. Mother has gone to the town on business, and we are taking care of the house, but So-so wants to go after the bird we saw run into the corn."

"Was it a pretty bird, my little dear?" asked the old woman.

"It was a very curious one," said Joan, "and I should like to go after it myself, but we can't leave the house."

"Dear, dear! Is there no neighbour would sit on the doorstep for you and keep the house till you just slip down to the field after the curious bird?" said the old woman.

"I'm afraid not," said little Joan. "Old Martha, our neighbour, is now bedridden. Of course, if she had been able to mind the house instead of us, it would have done just as well."

"I have some distance to go this evening," said the old woman, "but I do not object to a few minutes' rest, and sooner than that you should lose the bird I will sit on the doorstep to oblige you, while you run down to the corn-field."

"But can you bark if anyone comes?" asked little Joan. "For if you can't, So-so must stay with you."

"I can call you and the dog if I see anyone coming, and that will do just as well," said the old woman.

"So it will," replied little Joan, and off she ran to the cornfield, where, for that matter, So-so had run before her, and was bounding and barking and springing among the wheat-stalks.

They did not catch the bird, though they stayed longer than they had intended, and though So-so seemed to know more about hunting than was supposed.

"I daresay Mother has come home," said little Joan, as they went back up the field-path. "I hope she won't think we ought to have stayed in the house."

"It was taken care of," said So-so, and "that must do just as well."

When they reached the house, the widow had not come home.

But the old woman had gone, and she had taken the quilted petticoat and the duffle cloak, and the plumcake from the top shelf away with her; and no more was ever heard of any of the lot.

"For the future, my child," said the widow, "I hope you will always do just as you are told, whatever So-so may say."

"I will, Mother," said little Joan. (And she did.) But the house-dog sat and blinked. He dared not speak, he was in disgrace.

I do not feel quite sure about So-so. Wild dogs often amend their ways far on this side of the gallows, and the Faithful sometimes fall; but when anyone begins by being only So-so, he is very apt to be So-so to the end. So-sos so seldom change.

But this one was *very* soft and nice, and he got no cake that tea-time. On the whole we will hope that he lived to be a Good Dog ever after.

THE TRINITY FLOWER.

A LEGEND.

“BREAK forth, my lips, in praise, and own
The wiser love severely kind :
Since, richer for its chastening grown,
I see, whereas I once was blind.”

The Clear Vision, J. G. WHITTIER.



IN days of yore there was once a certain hermit, who dwelt in a cell, which he had fashioned for himself from a natural cave in the side of a hill.

Now this hermit had a great love for flowers, and was moreover learned in the virtues of herbs, and in that great mystery of healing which lies hidden among the green things of GOD. And so it came to pass that the

country people from all parts came to him for the simples which grew in the little garden which he had made before his cell. And as his fame spread, and more people came

to him, he added more and more to the plat which he had reclaimed from the waste land around.

But after many years there came a Spring when the colours of the flowers seemed paler to the hermit than they used to be; and as Summer drew on, their shapes became indistinct, and he mistook one plant for another; and when Autumn came, he told them by their various scents, and by their form, rather than by sight; and when the flowers were gone, and Winter had come, the hermit was quite blind.

Now in the hamlet below there lived a boy who had become known to the hermit on this manner. On the edge of the hermit's garden there grew two crab trees, from the fruit of which he made every year a certain confection, which was very grateful to the sick. One year many of these crab-apples were stolen, and the sick folk of the hamlet had very little conserve. So the following year, as the fruit was ripening, the hermit spoke every day to those who came to his cell, saying:—

“I pray you, good people, to make it known that he who robs these crab trees, robs not me alone, which is dishonest, but the sick, which is inhuman.”

And yet once more the crab-apples were taken.

The following evening, as the hermit sat on the side of the hill, he overheard two boys disputing about the theft.

“It must either have been a very big man, or a small boy, to do it,” said one. “So I say, and I have my reason.”

“And what is thy reason, Master Wiseacre?” asked the other.

“The fruit is too high to be plucked except by a very big man,” said the first boy. “And the branches are not strong enough for any but a child to climb.”

“Canst thou think of no other way to rob an apple tree but by standing a-tip-toe, or climbing up to the apples, when they should come down to thee?” said the second

boy. "Truly thy head will never save thy heels; but here's a riddle for thee :

Riddle me riddle me re,
Four big brothers are we ;
We gather the fruit, but climb never a tree.

Who are they ?"

"Four tall robbers, I suppose," said the other.

"Tush !" cried his comrade. "They are the four winds ; and when they whistle, down falls the ripest. But others can shake besides the winds, as I will shew thee if thou hast any doubts in the matter."

And as he spoke he sprang to catch the other boy, who ran from him ; and they chased each other down the hill, and the hermit heard no more.

But as he turned to go home he said, "The thief was not far away when thou stoodst near. Nevertheless, I will have patience. It needs not that I should go to seek thee, for what saith the Scripture? *Thy sin* will find thee out." And he made conserve of such apples as were left, and said nothing.

Now after a certain time a plague broke out in the hamlet ; and it was so sore, and there were so few to nurse the many who were sick, that, though it was not the wont of the hermit ever to leave his place, yet in their need he came down and ministered to the people in the village. And one day, as he passed a certain house, he heard moans from within, and entering, he saw lying upon a bed a boy who tossed and moaned in fever, and cried out most miserably that his throat was parched and burning. And when the hermit looked upon his face, behold it was the boy who had given the riddle of the four winds upon the side of the hill.

Then the hermit fed him with some of the confection which he had with him, and it was so grateful to the boy's



“Entering, he saw lying upon a bed a boy who tossed and moaned in fever. behold it was the boy who had given the riddle of the four winds.”—PAGE 32.

parched palate, that he thanked and blessed the hermit aloud, and prayed him to leave a morsel of it behind. to soothe his torments in the night.

Then said the hermit, "My Son, I would that I had more of this confection, for the sake of others as well as for thee. But indeed I have only two trees which bear the fruit whereof this is made; and in two successive years have the apples been stolen by some thief, thereby robbing not only me, which is dishonest, but the poor, which is inhuman."

Then the boy's theft came back to his mind, and he burst into tears, and cried, "My Father, I took the crab-apples!"

And after awhile he recovered his health; the plague also abated in the hamlet, and the hermit went back to his cell. But the boy would thenceforth never leave him, always wishing to shew his penitence and gratitude. And though the hermit sent him away, he ever returned, saying,

"Of what avail is it to drive me from thee, since I am resolved to serve thee, even as Samuel served Eli, and Timothy ministered unto St. Paul?"

But the hermit said, "My rule is to live alone, and without companions; wherefore begone."

And when the boy still came, he drove him from the garden.

Then the boy wandered far and wide, over moor and bog, and gathered rare plants and herbs, and laid them down near the hermit's cell. And when the hermit was inside, the boy came into the garden, and gathered the stones and swept the paths, and tied up such plants as were drooping, and did all neatly and well, for he was a quick and skilful lad. And when the hermit said,

"Thou hast done well, and I thank thee; but now begone," he only answered,

"What avails it, when I am resolved to serve thee?"

So at last there came a day when the hermit said, "It may be that it is ordained; wherefore abide, my Son."

And the boy answered, "Even so, for I am resolved to serve thee."

Thus he remained. And thenceforward the hermit's garden throve as it had never thriven before. For, though he had skill, the hermit was old and feeble; but the boy was young and active, and he worked hard, and it was to him a labour of love. And being a clever boy, he quickly knew the names and properties of the plants as well as the hermit himself. And when he was not working, he would go far afield to seek for new herbs. And he always returned to the village at night.

Now when the hermit's sight began to fail, the boy put him right if he mistook one plant for another; and when the hermit became quite blind, he relied completely upon the boy to gather for him the herbs that he wanted. And when anything new was planted, the boy led the old man to the spot, that he might know that it was so many paces in such a direction from the cell, and might feel the shape and texture of the leaves, and learn its scent. And through the skill and knowledge of the boy, the hermit was in no wise hindered from preparing his accustomed remedies, for he knew the names and virtues of the herbs, and where every plant grew. And when the sun shone, the boy would guide his master's steps into the garden, and would lead him up to certain flowers; but to those which had a perfume of their own the old man could go without help, being guided by the scent. And as he fingered their leaves and breathed their fragrance, he would say, "Blessed be GOD for every herb of the field, but thrice blessed for those that smell."

And at the end of the garden was set a bush of rosemary. "For," said the hermit, "to this we must all come." Because rosemary is the herb they scatter over the dead.

And he knew where almost everything grew, and what he did not know the boy told him.

Yet for all this, and though he had embraced poverty and solitude with joy, in the service of GOD and man, yet so bitter was blindness to him, that he bewailed the loss of his sight, with a grief that never lessened.

"For," said he, "if it had pleased our Lord to send me any other affliction, such as a continual pain or a consuming sickness, I would have borne it gladly, seeing it would have left me free to see these herbs, which I use for the benefit of the poor. But now the sick suffer through my blindness, and to this boy also I am a continual burden."

And when the boy called him at the hours of prayer, saying, "My Father, it is now time for the Nones office, for the marygold is closing," or, "The Vespers bell will soon sound from the valley, for the bindweed bells are folded," and the hermit recited the appointed prayers, he always added,

"I beseech Thee take away my blindness, as Thou didst heal Thy servant the son of Timæus."

And as the boy and he sorted herbs, he cried,

"Is there no balm in Gilead?"

And the boy answered, "The balm of Gilead grows six full paces from the gate, my Father."

But the hermit said, "I spoke in a figure, my Son. I meant not that herb. But, alas! Is there no remedy to heal the physician? No cure for the curer?"

And the boy's heart grew heavier day by day, because of the hermit's grief. For he loved him.

Now one morning as the boy came up from the village, the hermit met him, groping painfully with his hands, but with joy in his countenance, and he said, "Is that thy step, my Son? Come in, for I have somewhat to tell thee."

And he said, "A vision has been vouchsafed to me,

even a dream. Moreover, I believe that there shall be a cure for my blindness."

Then the boy was glad, and begged of the hermit to relate his dream, which he did as follows:—

"I dreamed, and behold I stood in the garden—thou also with me—and many people were gathered at the gate, to whom, with thy help, I gave herbs of healing in such fashion as I have been able since this blindness came upon me. And when they were gone, I smote upon my forehead, and said, 'Where is the herb that shall heal my affliction?' And a voice beside me said, 'Here, my Son.' And I cried to thee, 'Who spoke?' And thou saidst, 'It is a man in pilgrim's weeds, and lo, he hath a strange flower in his hand.' Then said the Pilgrim, 'It is a Trinity Flower. Moreover, I suppose that when thou hast it, thou wilt see clearly.' Then I thought that thou didst take the flower from the Pilgrim and put it in my hand. And lo, my eyes were opened, and I saw clearly. And I knew the Pilgrim's face, though where I have seen him I cannot yet recall. But I believed him to be Raphael the Archangel—he who led Tobias, and gave sight to his father. And even as it came to me to know him, he vanished; and I saw him no more."

"And what was the Trinity Flower like, my Father?" asked the boy.

"It was about the size of Herb Paris, my son," replied the hermit. "But instead of being fourfold every way, it numbered the mystic Three. Every part was threefold. The leaves were three, the petals three, the sepals three. The flower was snow-white, but on each of the three parts it was stained with crimson stripes, like white garments dyed in blood."*

Then the boy started up, saying, "If there be such a plant on the earth I will find it for thee."

But the hermit laid his hand on him, and said, "Nay,

* *Trillium erythrocarpum*. North America.

my Son, leave me not, for I have need of thee. And the flower will come yet, and then I shall see."

And all day long the old man murmured to himself, "Then I shall see."

"And didst thou see me, and the garden, in thy dream, my Father?" asked the boy.

"Ay, that I did, my Son. And I meant to say to thee that it much pleaseth me that thou art grown so well, and of such a strangely fair countenance. Also the garden is such as I have never before beheld it, which must needs be due to thy care. But wherefore didst thou not tell me of those fair palms that have grown where the thorn hedge was wont to be? I was but just stretching out my hand for some, when I awoke."

"There are no palms there, my Father," said the boy.

"Now, indeed it is thy youth that makes thee so little observant," said the hermit. "However, I pardon thee, if it were only for that good thought which moved thee to plant a yew beyond the rosemary bush; seeing that the yew is the emblem of eternal life, which lies beyond the grave."

But the boy said, "There is no yew there, my Father."

"Have I not seen it, even in a vision?" cried the hermit. "Thou wilt say next that all the borders are not set with hearts-ease, which indeed must be through thy industry; and whence they come I know not, but they are most rare and beautiful, and my eyes long sore to see them again."

"Alas, my Father!" cried the boy, "the borders are set with rue, and there are but a few clumps of hearts-ease here and there."

"Could I forget what I saw in an hour?" asked the old man angrily. "And did not the holy Raphael himself point to them, saying, 'Blessed are the eyes that behold this garden, where the borders are set with hearts-ease, and the hedges crowned with palm!' But thou wouldst know better than an archangel, forsooth."

Then the boy wept; and when the hermit heard him weeping, he put his arm round him and said,

"Weep not, my dear Son. And I pray thee, pardon me that I spoke harshly to thee. For indeed I am ill-tempered by reason of my infirmities; and as for thee, GOD will reward thee for thy goodness to me, as I never can. Moreover, I believe it is thy modesty, which is as great as thy goodness, that hath hindered thee from telling me of all that thou hast done for my garden, even to those fair and sweet everlasting flowers, the like of which I never saw before, which thou hast set in the east border, and where even now I hear the bees humming in the sun."

Then the boy looked sadly out into the garden, and answered, "I cannot lie to thee. There are no everlasting flowers. It is the flowers of the thyme in which the bees are rioting. And in the hedge bottom there creepeth the bitter-sweet."

But the hermit heard him not. He had groped his way out into the sunshine, and wandered up and down the walks, murmuring to himself, "Then I shall see."

Now when the Summer was past, one autumn morning there came to the garden gate a man in pilgrim's weeds; and when he saw the boy he beckoned to him, and giving him a small tuber root, he said,

"Give this to thy master. It is the root of the Trinity Flower."

And he passed on down towards the valley.

Then the boy ran hastily to the hermit; and when he had told him, and given him the root, he said,

"The face of the pilgrim is known to me also, O my Father! For I remember when I lay sick of the plague, that ever it seemed to me as if a shadowy figure passed in and out, and went up and down the streets, and his face was as the face of this pilgrim. But—I cannot deceive thee—methought it was the Angel of Death."

Then the hermit mused ; and after a little space he answered,

"It was then also that I saw him. I remember now. Nevertheless, let us plant the root, and abide what GOD shall send."

And thus they did.

And as the Autumn and Winter went by, the hermit became very feeble, but the boy constantly cheered him, saying, "Patience, my Father. Thou shalt see yet!"

But the hermit replied, "My son, I repent me that I have not been patient under affliction. Moreover, I have set thee an ill example, in that I have murmured at that which GOD—Who knoweth best—ordained for me."

And when the boy oftentimes repeated, "Thou shalt yet see," the hermit answered, "If GOD will. When GOD will. As GOD will."

And when he said the prayers for the Hours, he no longer added what he had added beforetime, but evermore repeated, "If THOU wilt. When THOU wilt. As THOU wilt!"

And so the Winter passed ; and when the snow lay on the ground the boy and the hermit talked of the garden ; and the boy no longer contradicted the old man, though he spoke continually of the hearts-ease, and the everlasting flowers, and the palm. For he said, "When Spring comes I may be able to get these plants, and fit the garden to his vision."

And at length the Spring came. And with it rose the Trinity Flower. And when the leaves unfolded, they were three, as the hermit had said. Then the boy was wild with joy and with impatience. And when the sun shone for two days together, he would kneel by the flower, and say, "I pray thee, Lord, send showers, that it may wax apace." And when it rained, he said, "I pray Thee, send sunshine, that it may blossom speedily." For he knew

not what to ask. And he danced about the hermit, and cried, "Soon shalt thou see."

But the hermit trembled, and said, "Not as I will, but as THOU wilt!"

And so the bud formed. And at length one evening, before he went down to the hamlet, the boy came to the hermit and said, "The bud is almost breaking, my Father. To-morrow thou shalt see."

Then the hermit moved his hands till he laid them on the boy's head, and he said,

"The Lord repay thee sevenfold for all thou hast done for me, dear child. And now I pray thee, my Son, give me thy pardon for all in which I have sinned against thee by word or deed, for indeed my thoughts of thee have ever been tender." And when the boy wept, the hermit still pressed him, till he said that he forgave him. And as they unwillingly parted, the hermit said, "I pray thee, dear Son, to remember that, though late, I conformed myself to the will of GOD."

Saying which, the hermit went into his cell, and the boy returned to the village.

But so great was his anxiety, that he could not rest; and he returned to the garden ere it was light, and sat by the flower till the dawn.

And with the first dim light he saw that the Trinity Flower was in bloom. And as the hermit had said, it was white, and stained with crimson as with blood.

Then the boy shed tears of joy, and he plucked the flower and ran into the hermit's cell, where the hermit lay very still upon his couch. And the boy said, "I will not disturb him. When he wakes he will find the flower." And he went out and sat down outside the cell and waited. And being weary as he waited, he fell asleep.

Now before sunrise, whilst it was yet early, he was awakened by the voice of the hermit crying, "My Son, my dear Son!" and he jumped up, saying, "My Father!"

But as he spoke the hermit passed him. And as he passed he turned, and the boy saw that his eyes were open. And the hermit fixed them long and tenderly on him.

Then the boy cried, "Ah, tell me, my Father, dost thou see?"

And he answered, "*I see now!*" and so passed on down the walk.

And as he went through the garden, in the still dawn, the boy trembled, for the hermit's footsteps gave no sound. And he passed beyond the rosemary bush, and came not again.

And when the day wore on, and the hermit did not return, the boy went into his cell.

Without, the sunshine dried the dew from paths on which the hermit's feet had left no prints, and cherished the spring flowers bursting into bloom. But within, the hermit's dead body lay stretched upon his pallet, and the Trinity Flower was in his hand.



THE KYRKEGRIM TURNED PREACHER.

A LEGEND.



T is said that in Norway every church has its own Niss, or Brownie.

They are of the same race as the Good People, who haunt farm-houses, and do the maids' work for a pot of cream. They are the size of a year-old child,

but their faces are the faces of aged men. Their common dress is of grey home-spun, with red peaked caps; but on Michaelmas Day they wear round hats.

The Church Niss is called Kyrkegrim. His duty is to keep the church clean, and to scatter the marsh-marigold flowers on the floor before service. He also keeps order in the congregation, pinches those who fall asleep, cuffs irreverent boys, and hustles mothers with crying children out of church as quickly and decorously as possible.

But his business is not with church-brawlers alone.

When the last snow avalanche has slipped from the high-pitched roof, and the gentian is bluer than the sky, and Baldur's Eyebrow blossoms in the hot spring sun, pious folk are wont to come to church some time before service, and to bring their spades, and rakes, and watering-pots with them, to tend the graves of the dead. The Kyrkegrim sits on the Lych Gate and overlooks them.

At those who do not lay by their tools in good time he throws pebbles, crying to each, "*Skynde dig!*" (Make haste!), and so drives them in. And when the bells begin, should any man fail to bow to the church as the custom is, the Kyrkegrim snatches his hat from behind, and he sees it no more.

Nothing displeases the Kyrkegrim more than when people fall asleep during the sermon. This will be seen in the following story.

Once upon a time there was a certain country church, which was served by a very mild and excellent priest, and haunted by a most active Kyrkegrim.

Not a speck of dust was to be seen from the altar to the porch, and the behaviour of the congregation was beyond reproach.

But there was one fat farmer who slept during the sermon, and do what the Kyrkegrim would, he could not keep him awake. Again and again did he pinch him, nudge him, or let in a cold draught of wind upon his neck. The fat farmer shook himself, pulled up his neck-kerchief, and dozed off again.

"Doubtless the fault is in my sermons," said the priest, when the Kyrkegrim complained to him. For he was humble-minded.

But the Kyrkegrim knew that this was not the case, for there was no better preacher in all the district.

And yet when he overheard the farmer's sharp-tongued



“But there was one fat farmer who slept during the sermon, and do what the Kyrkegrim would, he could not keep him awake.”—PAGE 44.

little wife speak of this and that in the discourse, he began to think that it might be so. No doubt the preacher spoke somewhat fast or slow, a little too loud or too soft. And he was not "stirring" enough, said the farmer's wife; a failing which no one had ever laid at her door.

"His soul is in my charge," sighed the good priest, "and I cannot even make him hear what I have got to say. A heavy reckoning will be demanded of me!"

"The sermons are in fault, beyond a doubt," the Kyrkegrim said. "The farmer's wife is quite right. She's a sensible woman, and can use a mop as well as myself."

"Hoot, hoot!" cried the church owl, pushing his head out of the ivy-bush. "And shall she be Kyrkegrim when thou art turned preacher, and the preacher sits on the judgment seat? Not so, little Niss! Dust thou the pulpit, and leave the parson to preach, and let the Maker of souls reckon with them."

"If the preacher cannot keep the people awake, it is time that another took his place," said the Kyrkegrim.

"He is not bound to find ears as well as arguments," retorted the owl, and he drew back into his ivy bush.

But the Kyrkegrim settled his red cap firmly on his head, and betook himself to the priest, whose meekness (as is apt to be the case) encouraged the opposite qualities in those with whom he had to do.

"The farmer must be roused somehow," said he. "It is a disgrace to us all, and what, in all the hundreds of years I have been Kyrkegrim, never befell me before. It will be well if next Sunday you preach a stirring sermon on some very important subject."

So the preacher preached on Sin—fair of flower, and bitter of fruit!—and as he preached his own cheeks grew pale for other men's perils, and the Kyrkegrim trembled as he sat listening in the porch, though he had no soul to lose.

"Was that stirring enough?" he asked, twitching the sleeve of the farmer's wife as she flounced out after service.

"Splendid!" said she, "and must have hit some folk pretty hard too."

"It kept your husband awake this time, I should think," said the Kyrkegrim.

"Heighty teighty!" cried the farmer's wife. "I'd have you to know my good man is as decent a body as any in the parish, if he does take a nap on Sundays! He is no sinner if he is no saint, thank Heaven, and the parson knows better than to preach at him."

"Next Sunday," said the Kyrkegrim to the priest, "preach about something which concerns everyone; respectable people as well as others."

So the preacher preached of Death—whom tears cannot move, nor riches bribe, nor power defy. The uncertain interruption and the only certain end of all life's labours! And as he preached, the women sitting in their seats wept for the dead whose graves they had been tending, and down the aged cheeks of the Kyrkegrim there stole tears of pity for poor men, whose love and labours are cut short so soon.

But the farmer slept as before.

"Do you not expect to die?" asked the Kyrkegrim.

"Surely," replied the farmer, "we must all die some day, and one does not need a preacher to tell him that. But it was a funeral sermon, my wife thinks. There has been bereavement in the miller's family."

"Men are a strange race," thought the Kyrkegrim; but he went to the priest and said—"The farmer is not afraid of death. You must find some subject of which men really stand in awe."

So when Sunday came round again, the preacher preached of Judgment—that dread Avenger who dogs the footsteps of trespass, even now! That awful harvest

of whirlwind and corruption which they must reap who sow to the wind and to the flesh! Lightly regarded, but biding its time, till a man's forgotten follies find him out at last.

But the farmer slept on. He did not wake when the preacher spoke of judgment to come, the reckoning that cannot be shunned, the trump of the Archangel, and the Day of Doom.

"On Michaelmas Day I shall preach myself," said the Kyrkegrim, "and if I cannot rouse him, I shall give up my charge here."

This troubled the poor priest, for so good a Kyrkegrim was not likely to be found again.

Nevertheless he consented, for he was very meek, and when Michaelmas Day came the Kyrkegrim pulled a preacher's gown over his homespun coat, and laid his round hat on the desk by the iron-clamped Bible, and began his sermon.

"I shall give no text," said he, "but when I have said what seems good to me, it is for those who hear to see if the Scriptures bear me out."

This was an uncommon beginning, and most of the good folk pricked their ears, the farmer among them, for novelty is agreeable in church as elsewhere.

"I speak," said the Kyrkegrim, "of that which is the last result of sin, the worst of deaths, and the beginning of judgment—hardness of heart."

The farmer looked a little uncomfortable, and the Kyrkegrim went bravely on.

"Let us seek examples in Scripture. We will speak of Pharaoh."

But when the Kyrkegrim spoke of Pharaoh the farmer was at ease again. And by-and-bye a film stole gently before his eyes, and he nodded in his seat.

This made the Kyrkegrim very angry, for he did not

wish to give up his place, and yet a Niss may not break his word.

"Let us look at the punishment of Pharaoh," he cried. But the farmer's eyes were still closed, and the Kyrkegrim became agitated, and turned hastily over the leaves of the iron-clamped Bible before him.

"We will speak of the plagues," said he. "The plague of blood, the plague of frogs, the plague of lice, the plague of flies——"

At this moment the farmer snored.

For a brief instant, anger and dismay kept the Kyrkegrim silent. Then shutting the iron clamps he pushed the Book on one side, and scrambling on to a stool, stretched his little body well over the desk, and said, "But these flies were as nothing to the fly that is coming in the turnip-crop!"

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the farmer sat suddenly upright, and half rising from his place, cried anxiously, "Eh, what sir? What does he say, wife? A new fly among the turnips?"

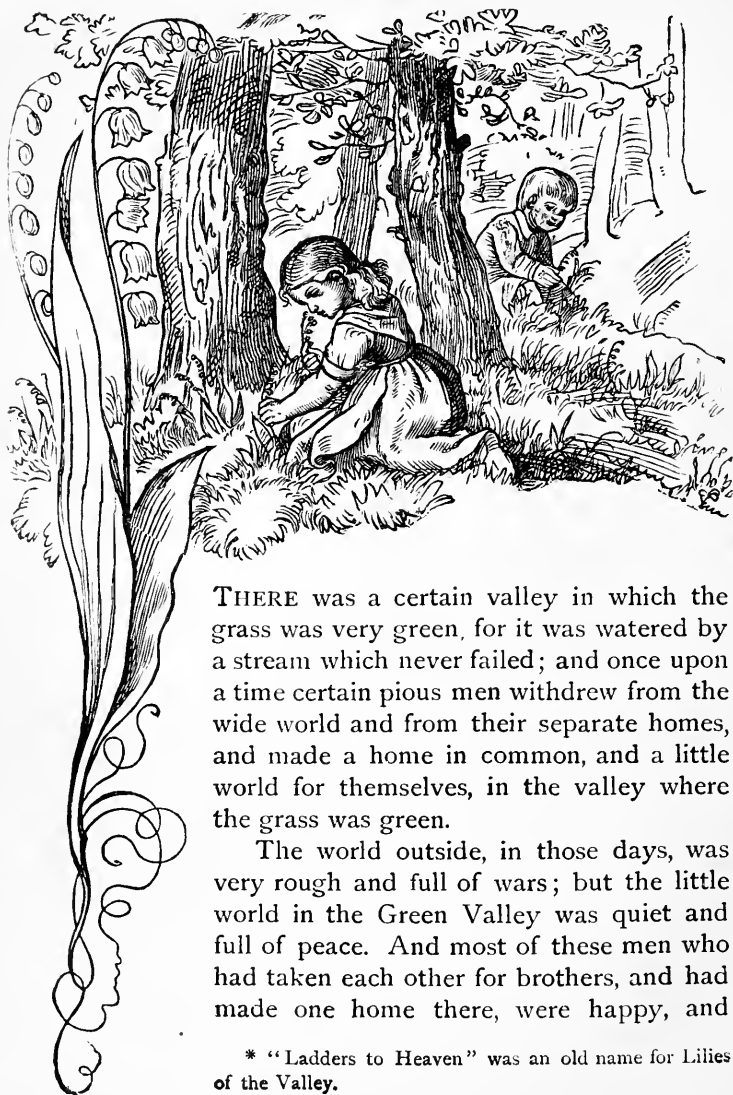
"Ah, soul of clay!" yelled the indignant Kyrkegrim, as he hurled his round hat at the gaping farmer. "Is it indeed for such as thee that Eternal Life is kept in store?"

And drawing the preacher's gown over his head, he left it in the pulpit, and scrambling down the steps hastened out of church.

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As he had been successful in rousing the sleepy farmer the Kyrkegrim did not abandon his duties; but it is said that thenceforward he kept to them alone, and left heavier responsibilities in higher hands.

LADDERS TO HEAVEN.*—A LEGEND.



THERE was a certain valley in which the grass was very green, for it was watered by a stream which never failed; and once upon a time certain pious men withdrew from the wide world and from their separate homes, and made a home in common, and a little world for themselves, in the valley where the grass was green.

The world outside, in those days, was very rough and full of wars; but the little world in the Green Valley was quiet and full of peace. And most of these men who had taken each other for brothers, and had made one home there, were happy, and

* "Ladders to Heaven" was an old name for Lilies of the Valley.

being good deserved to be so. And some of them were good with the ignorant innocence of children, and there were others who had washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.

Brother Benedict was so named, because where he came blessings followed. This was said of him, from a child, when the babies stopped crying if he ran up to them, and when on the darkest days old women could see sunbeams playing in his hair. He had always been fond of flowers, and as there were not many things in the Brotherhood of the Green Valley on which a man could full-spend his energies, when prayers were said, and duties done, Brother Benedict spent the balance of his upon the garden. And he grew herbs for healing, and plants that were good for food, and flowers that were only pleasant to the eyes; and where he sowed he reaped, and what he planted prospered, as if blessings followed him.

In time the fame of his flowers spread beyond the valley, and people from the world outside sent to beg plants and seeds of him, and sent him others in return. And he kept a roll of the plants that he possessed, and the list grew longer with every Autumn and every Spring; so that the garden of the monastery became filled with rare and curious things, in which Brother Benedict took great pride.

The day came when he thought that he took too much pride. For he said, "The cares of the garden are, after all, cares of this world, and I have set my affections upon things of the earth." And at last it so troubled him that he obtained leave to make a pilgrimage to the cell of an old hermit, whose wisdom was much esteemed, and to him he told his fears.

But when Brother Benedict had ended his tale, the old man said, "Go in peace. What a man labours for he must love, if he be made in the image of his Maker; for He rejoices in the works of His hands."

So Brother Benedict returned, and his conscience was at ease till the Autumn, when a certain abbot, who spent much care and pains upon his garden, was on a journey, and rested at the Monastery of the Green Valley. And it appeared that he had more things in his garden than Brother Benedict, for the abbey was very rich, and he had collected far and near. And Brother Benedict was jealous for the garden of the monastery, and then he was wrath with himself for his jealousy; and when the abbot had gone he obtained leave, and made a pilgrimage to the cell of the hermit and told him all. And the old man, looking at him, loved him, and he said:

"My son, a man may bind his soul with fine-drawn strands till it is either entangled in a web or breaks all bonds. Gird thyself with one strong line, and let little things go by."

And Benedict said, "With which line?"

And the hermit answered, "What said Augustine? 'Love, and do what thou wilt.' If therefore thy labours and thy pride be for others, and not for thyself, have no fear. He who lives for GOD and for his neighbours may forget his own soul in safety, and shall find it hereafter; for for such a spirit—of the toils and pains and pleasures of this life—grace shall alike build Ladders unto Heaven."

Then Benedict bowed his head, and departed; and when he reached home he found a messenger who had ridden for many days, and who brought him a bundle of roots, and a written message, which ran thus:

"These roots, though common with us, are unknown where thou dwellest. It is a lily, as white and as fragrant as the Lily of the Annunciation, but much smaller. Beautiful as it is, it is hardy, and if planted in a damp spot and left strictly undisturbed it will spread and flourish like a weed. It hath a rare and delicate perfume, and having white bells on many footstalks up the stem, one above the

other, as the angels stood in Jacob's dream, the common children call it Ladders to Heaven."

And when Brother Benedict read the first part of the letter he laughed hastily, and said, "The abbot hath no such lily." But when he had finished it, he said, "GOD rid my soul of self-seeking! The common children shall have them, and not I."

And, seizing the plants and a spade, he ran out beyond the bounds of the monastery, and down into a little copse where the earth was kept damp by the waters of the stream which never failed. And there he planted the roots, and as he turned to go away he said, "The blessing of our Maker rest on thee! And give joy of thy loveliness, and pleasure of thy perfume, to others when I am gone. And let him who enjoys remember the soul of him who planted thee."

And he covered his face with his hands, and went back to the monastery. And he did not enter the new plant upon his roll, for he had no such lily in his garden.

* * * * *

Brother Benedict's soul had long departed, when in times of turbulence and change, the monastery was destroyed, and between fire and plunder and reckless destruction everything perished, and even the garden was laid waste. But no one touched the Lilies of the Valley in the copse below, for they were so common that they were looked upon as weeds. And though nothing remained of the brotherhood but old tales, these lingered, and were handed on; and when the children played with the lilies and bickered over them, crying, "My ladder has twelve white angels and yours has only eight," they would often call them Brother Benedict's flowers, adding, "but the real right name of them is Ladders to Heaven."

And after a time a new race came into the Green Valley and filled it; and the stream which never failed

turned many wheels, and trades were brisk, and they were what are called black trades. And men made money soon, and spent it soon, and died soon ; and in the time between each lived for himself, and had little reverence for those who were gone, and less concern for those who should come after. And at first they were too busy to care for what is only beautiful, but after a time they built smart houses, and made gardens, and went down into the copse and tore up clumps of Brother Benedict's flowers, and planted them in exposed rockeries, and in pots in dry hot parlours, where they died, and then the good folk went back for more ; and no one reckoned if he was taking more than his fair share, or studied the culture of what he took away, or took the pains to cover the roots of those he left behind, and in three years there was not left a Ladder to Heaven in all the Green Valley.

The Green Valley had long been called the Black Valley, when those who laboured and grew rich in it awoke—as man must sooner or later awake—to the needs of the spirit above the flesh. They were a race famed for music, and they became more so. The love of beauty also grew, and was cultivated, and in time there were finer flowers blossoming in that smoky air than under many brighter skies. And with the earnings of their grimy trades they built a fine church, and adorned it more richly than the old church of the monastery, that had been destroyed.

The parson who served this church and this people was as well-beloved by them as Brother Benedict had been in his day, and it was in striving to link their minds with sympathies of the past as well as hopes of the future, that one day he told them the legend of the Ladders to Heaven. A few days afterwards he was wandering near the stream, when he saw two or three lads with grimy faces busily at work in the wood through which the stream ran. At first,

when he came suddenly on them, they looked shyly at one another, and at last one stood up and spoke.

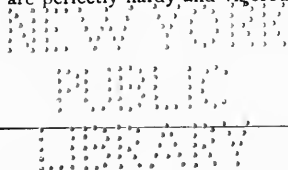
"It's a few lily roots, sir, we got in the market, and we're planting them; and two or three of us have set ourselves to watch that they are not shifted till they've settled. Maybe we shall none of us see them fair wild here again, any more than Brother Benedict did. For black trades are short-lived trades, and there's none of us will be as old as he. But maybe we can take a pride too in thinking that they'll blow for other folk and other folk's children when we are gone."

* * * * *

Once more the fastidious* flowers spread, and became common in the valley, and were guarded with jealous care; and the memory of Brother Benedict lingered by the stream, and was doubly blessed.

For if he is blessed whose love and wisdom add to the world's worth, and make life richer in pleasant things, thrice blessed is he whose unselfish example shall be culture to the ignorant or the thoughtless, and set Ladders to Heaven for the feet of those who follow him!

* It is well known that Lilies of the Valley are flowers which resent disturbance, though they are perfectly hardy and vigorous if left in peace.



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